



# The Negation Phrase in Búlu

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FOLLOWING the split CP analysis (Rizzi 1997), it is admitted that the highest position of the clause structure is the Force Phrase. This paper describes and analyses the structure of the negation phrase in Búlu and shows that the behaviour of some negation markers go against this proposal. Therefore, it is shown that the data attested in Búlu, enriches the cartography of the Force-Finiteness system by displaying a negation phrase above Force Phrase..

**KEY WORDS:** NEGATION PHRASE, FORCE PHRASE, BÚLU

### INTRODUCTION

Búlu is a Cameroonian language mainly spoken in Djoum, Bengbis, Kribi, Sangmelima and Ebolowa. According to the United Bible Societies (1991), the language has about 800.000 speakers among which 200.000 are not native speakers. Although the language is circumscribed in the Búlu area, it is also used out of its locality.

### NEGATION IN BÚLU

In Búlu, the negator (Neg) is a vocalic monophone morpheme with a high tone: /á -/, which is always placed between the verbal prefix and the formative. This morpheme is only attested in the indicative mood as can be observed in the following examples:

(1)    a. bə a- á - bo nale  
      they SM- Neg- do so  
      “They don’t do so”  
    b. bə a- á - dí áválətə  
      they SM- Neg- eat so  
      ‘They don’t eat so’

When this negator is employed alone, it is followed by a reduplicated verbal root and is attested in the indicative present tense:

(2)    a. ə-wulu “to walk”  
      b. bâwuluwulu “one doesn’t walk”

(3)      a. *ə tabə* “to seat”  
           b. *bâtabətabə* “one doesn’t seat like that”

### **THE NEGATOR WITH OTHER MORPHEMES**

In the indicative mood, the negation is rendered by the discontinuous signifier / á....ki / which is made up of the negator / á -/ and the appendix / ki/:

(4)      a. *mə a- a- á- yi ki ofumbí*  
           I SM- Pres- Neg- need Neg orange  
           “I don’t need an orange”  
       b. *Ela a- a- á- dí ki fón*  
           Ela SM- Pres- Neg- eat Neg corn  
           “Ela doesn’t eat corn”

As can be observed in the examples above, both elements / á....ki / encode the negation in Búlu. Thus, according to the behaviour of this negator and following Chomsky (1989) and contrary to Pollock (1989), one can say that á is the specifier of the negation phrase and ki is the head.

When the verb is conjugated in the recent and remote past, the tense marker in between the discontinuous negation morpheme in Búlu has a morphological modification and becomes ndí, the negation marker of these tenses are shown in the following examples:

(5)      a. *Ela a- á- ndí- dí fío*  
           Ela SM-Neg- P2- eat pear  
           “Ela has not eaten pear”  
       b. *Ela a- á- ndí- dí fío*  
           Ela SM- Neg- P3- eat pear  
           “Ela had not eaten pear”

As one can remark, in the examples above, ndí can be used both in P2 and P3 to mark negation.

When it concerns a non indicative conjugation, the negative expression is obtained with the use of the auxiliary /bə/ or the invariable /tə/ to which is adjoined the present form of the indicative mood:

(6) a. o bə- kə  
Alloc Aux go  
(2Ps) Neg- go  
“Don’t go”  
b. a bə- dí  
Alloc Aux eat  
(3Ps) Neg- eat  
“He should not eat”

(7) a. tə wo a- a- kə sikólo  
Neg you SM- pres- go school  
“Don’t go to school”

(8) tə Ondoua a- bom ngál  
Neg Ondoua SM- beat wife  
“Ondoua should not beat his wife”

Finally, there is a special marker in Búlu that seems to occupy only the left periphery of the clause. This marker is sakə.

## THE NEGATION MARKER SAKƏ

Let's consider the following examples:

(9) sakə Oyono ənyə a- a- kə- sikólo  
Neg Oyono Foc SM- Pres- go school  
“It is not Oyono who goes to school”

(10) (10)a sakə Oyono a- a- kə ndá  
Neg Oyono SM- Pres- go house  
“It is not Oyono who goes to the house”  
b. sakə zá(ənyə) a- ké- wé nyó  
Neg who Foc SM- P2-kill snake  
“It is not who who kill the snake”  
c. sakə mfondé (yaá) Ango a- ké- kus  
Neg shirt that Ango SM- P2- buy  
“It is not the shirt that Ango bought”  
d. sakə nâ Ango (ənyə) a- a- kus mfondé  
Neg that Ango Foc SM- Pres-buy shirt  
“It is not that Ango buys a shirt”

The examples above show that the negation marker sakə in Búlu is part of the Force-Finiteness system. This state of affairs questions the structure of the negation in Búlu. In other words, following the same examples, the negation with sakə can be given the structure below:

(11) NegP>AgreeP

Negation with sakə can be considered as a fragment negation in the sense of Chizuru Nakao (2008).

Now let's consider the following examples:

(12) a. sakə ma ma- a- kə sikólo  
 Neg I SM- Pres- go school  
 “I am not the one who is going to school”  
 b. \*ma ma sakə a- kə sikólo  
 I SM Neg Pres- go school  
 “I am not the one who is going to school”  
 c. sakə Oyono ənyə a- a- dí fón  
 Neg Oyono Foc SM- Pres-eat corn  
 “It is not Oyono who eats corn”  
 d. \*Oyono sakə ənyə a- a- dí fón  
 Oyono Neg Foc SM- Pres- eat corn  
 “It is not Oyono who eats corn”

(13) a. sakə zá (ənyə) a- a- dí fón  
 Neg who Foc SM- Pres- eat corn  
 “It is not who who eats corn”  
 b. \*zá sakə (ənyə) a- a- dí fón  
 who Neg Foc SM- Pres- eat corn  
 “It is not who who eats corn?”  
 c. ná sakə zá (ənyə) a- a- dí fón  
 that Neg who Foc SM- Pres-eat corn  
 “That it is not who who eats corn?”

(14) a. sakə mətwa (yaá) Ebaa a- a- dutu  
 Neg car that Ebaa SM- Pres- drive  
 “Not the car that Ebaa drives” (contrary to another car)  
 b. \*mətwa sakə (yaá) Ebaa a- a- dutu

car Neg that Ebaa SM- Pres- drive  
“It is not a car that Ebaa drives”

(15) a. sakə nā Ebaa (ənyə) a- a- dutu mətwa  
Neg that Ebaa Foc SM- Pres- drive car  
“It is not that Ebaa drives a car”

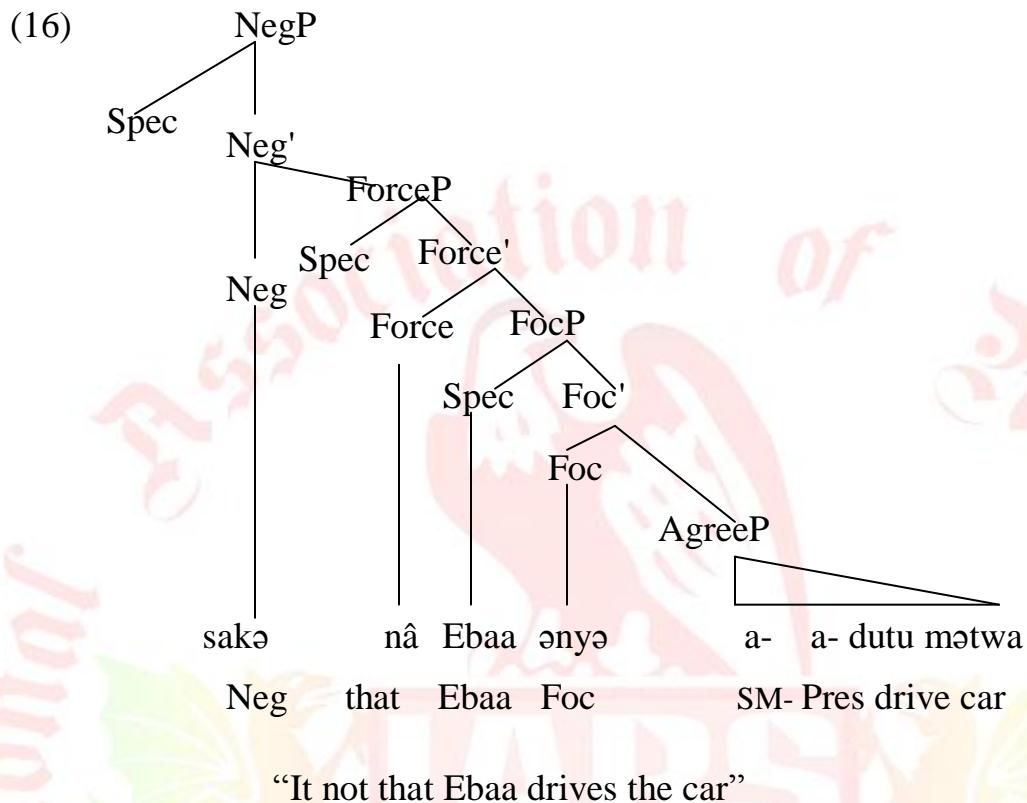
b. nā sakə Ebaa (ənyə) a- a- dutu mətwa  
that Neg Ebaa Foc SM- Pres- drive car  
“That it is not Ebaa who drives a car”

c. mətwa , sakə Ebaa (ənyə) a- a- dutu  
car Foc Ebaa Foc SM- Pres- drive  
“The car, it is not Ebaa who drives”

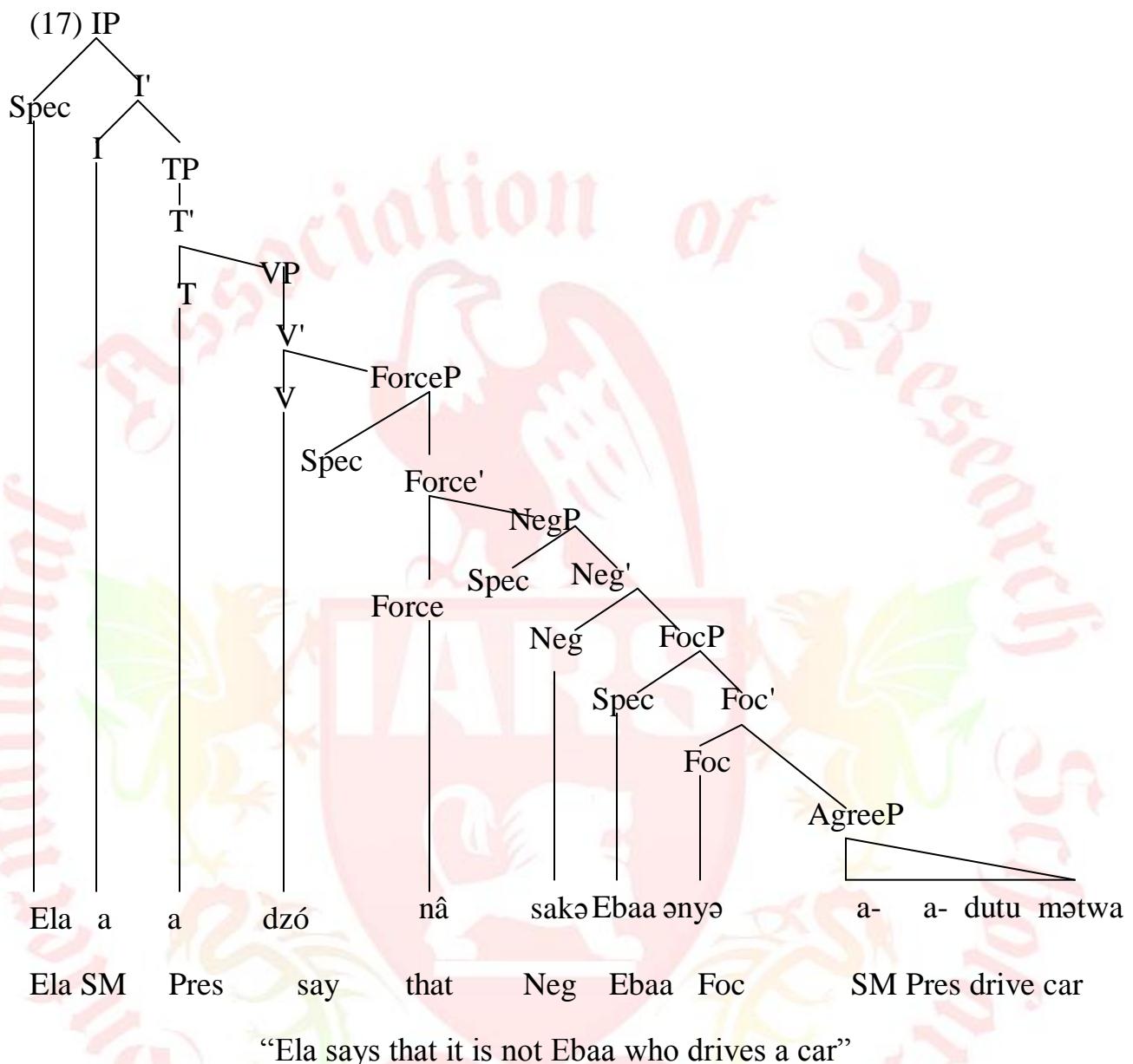
d. \* nā Ebaa sakə a- a- dutu mətwa  
that Ebaa Neg SM- Pres- drive car  
“It not that Ebaa drives the car”

The ungrammaticality of the examples above confirm that the negation marker sakə “It is not” is only attested in the left periphery. It can also occur alone (12a) or in the different transformations which are focalisation (12c), questions’ formation (13a), relativization (14a) and topicalisation (15c).

The presence of sakə “it is not” in the left periphery of the clause calls an adjustment of the fine structure of the left periphery proposed by Rizzi (1997). Indeed, according to Rizzi (1997) the highest position of the C system is the Force-Phrase (ForceP). But, the functioning of sakə “it is not”, shows that this marker can occupy a position above ForceP. To be convinced, let’s observe the following tree diagramme which illustrates the position of this element in the Búlu clause structure:



The tree diagramme above does not completely go against the structure proposed by Rizzi (1997) given that in the data attested in Búlu, the negation marker *sakə* “it is not” can occur in a position below ForceP (15b). This state of affairs gives the following alternative diagramme:



In order to understand the position of the negation marker sakə in the Force-Finiteness system, it is important to draw a parallel between negation and other constructions in the Force-Finiteness system. Given that the movement of complements in the left periphery at the specifier position of the head is a diagnostic (Aboh 2004: 238) for these peripheral markers which occur in the left periphery, one can understand that sakə be part of the Force-Finiteness system.

Apart from the negation marker *sakə*, there is also another negation marker which occupies this position of the sentence. It is the negator *tə*.

### 3 The negation marker *tə*

As *sakə*, the negation marker *tə* is also a constituent of the Force-Finiteness system, but this one is only attested in the matrix sentences and needs another element occurring also in the left periphery. To be convinced, let's examine the examples below:

(18) a. *tə wo a- a- kə ósoé*  
          Neg you SM Pres- go river  
          “Don’t go to the river”  
  b. *tə Ela a- a- kə ósoé*  
          Neg Ela SM Pres- go river  
          “Ela should not go to the river”

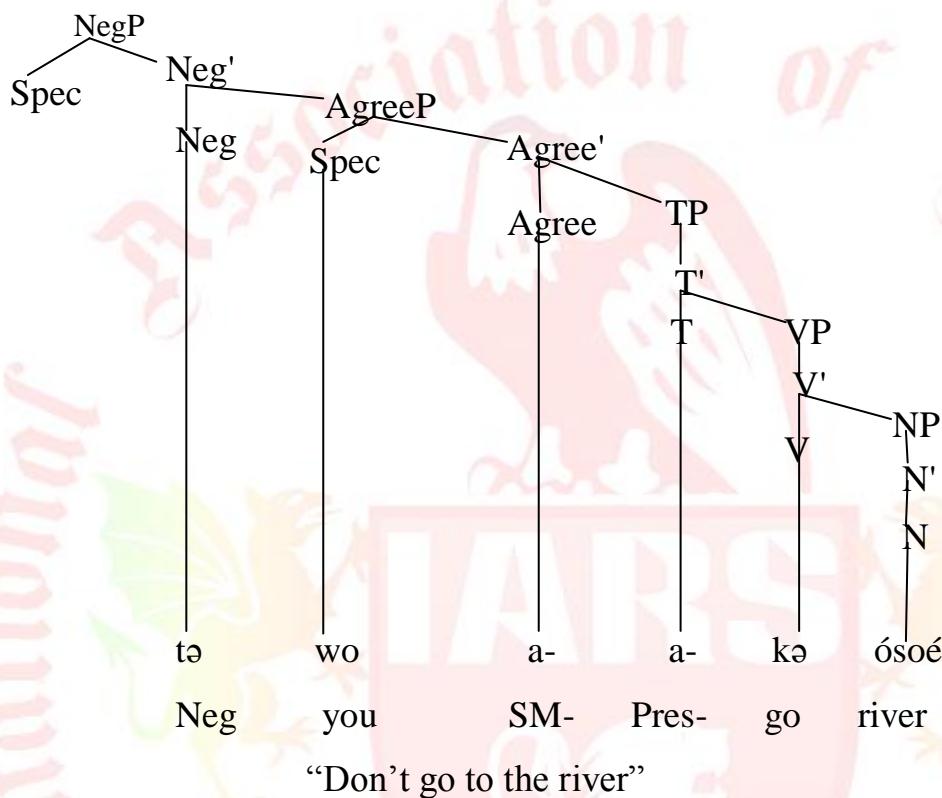
Remark that in the examples above, the sense of the sentence varies according to the use of the personal pronoun (18a) or a noun phrase (18b). This situation is not the matter of this paper. Our interest here is the position of this element in the clause structure. To better visualize this situation, let's observe the following examples:

(19) a. *Ango a- a- yi nâ tə Ela a- a- kə ósoé*  
          Ango SM- Pres- want that Neg Ela SM- Pres- go river  
          “Ango doesn’t want Ela to go the river”  
  b. *\*Ango a- a- yi tə Ela a- a- kə ósoé*  
          Ango SM- Pres- want Neg Ela SM- Pres- go river  
          “Ango wants Ela not to go to the river”  
  c. *\*Ango a- a- yi tə nâ Ela a- a- kə ósoé*  
          Ango SM- Pres- want Neg that Ela SM- Pres- go river  
          “Ango wants Ela not to go to the river”

A clear look at the three examples above reveals that *tə* can not appear alone in an embedded clause. The ungrammaticality of (19b) is explained by the absence of *nâ* in the sentence. However, when this one occurs with the complementizer *nâ*, the sentence is grammatical (19a). (19c) is ungrammatical because *tə* precedes *nâ*. The behaviour of *tə* leads us to think that this negation marker is only possible in the matrix sentences and doesn't need the presence of *nâ* to express negation in the embedded clauses. When *tə* is

alone at the initial position of the clause, it marks the negation of the imperative mood. With the previous information, tə can occupy the position below:

(20)



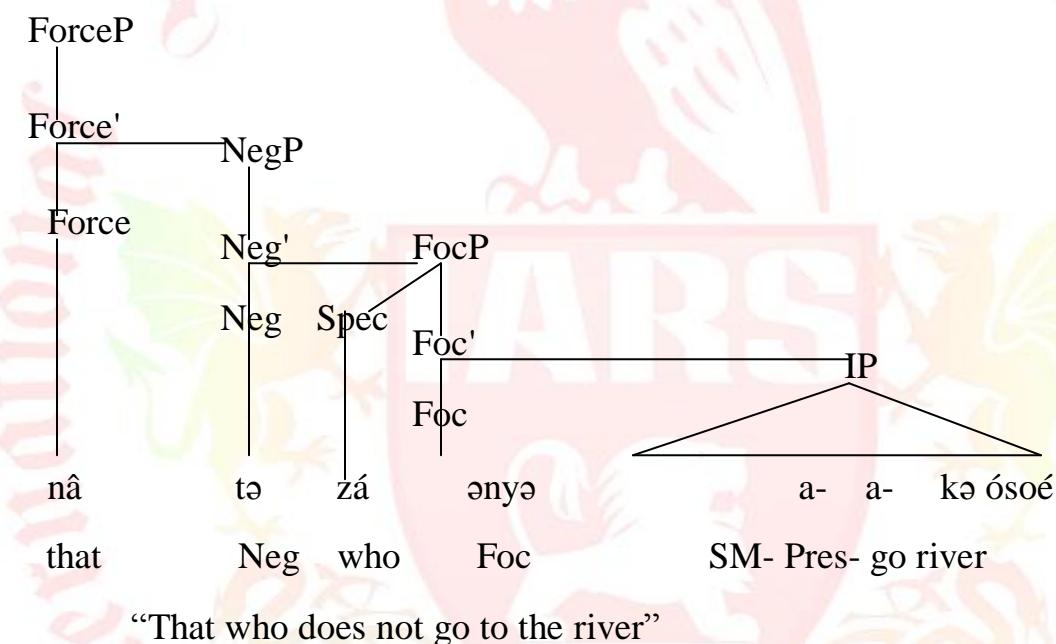
Now let's examine the examples below:

(21) a. Ela a- a- dzó nâ tə zá a- a- kə ósoé  
 Ela SM- Pres- say that Neg who SM- Pres- go river  
 "Ela says that who does not go to the river"  
 b. Ela a- a- dzó nâ tə zá ənyə a- a- kə ósoé  
 Ela SM- Pres- say that Neg who Foc SM-Pres- go river  
 "Ela says that who does not go to the river"  
 c.\*Ela a- a- dzó nâ zá tə a- a- kə ósoé  
 Ela SM- Pres- say that who Neg SM- Pres- go river  
 "Ela says that who does not go to the river"  
 d. Ela a- a- dzó nâ zá bo tə kə ósoé

Ela SM- Pres- say that who do Neg go river  
“Ela says that who does not go to the river”

The four examples above (21) result into the following remarks: the negation marker *tə* can occur with the Wh- phrase. However, it cannot precede the Wh-element. The ungrammaticality of (21c) is explained by the fact that *tə* has followed *zá* (who). For the Wh-element to precede the negation marker *tə*, there is a need of another morpheme, *bo* “do”, between the two as illustrates the example in (21d). The tree diagramme below clearly shows this situation in the clause structure:

(22)



## CONCLUSION

The description made in this paper contribute to have a large view of the left periphery in a comparative perspective and show that the behaviour of the negation markers *sakə* and *tə* in Búlu is pertinent to review the fine structure of the left periphery.

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